

# Control of Dogs, The Law and You

**YOU COULD BE BREAKING THE LAW BY ALLOWING YOUR DOG TO BE DANGEROUSLY OUT OF CONTROL...**



**...AND SOME TYPES OF DOG ARE BANNED**

## WHAT IS MEANT BY DANGEROUSLY OUT OF CONTROL?

**Any** dog is dangerously out of control if:

- it injures a person, or
- it behaves in a way that makes a person worried that it might injure them.

The law applies everywhere the general public is allowed to go and anywhere your dog goes where it is not supposed to be.

The maximum penalty for allowing a dog you own or are in charge of to be dangerously out of control is two years' imprisonment, or a fine, or both.

In addition, if your dog is dangerously out of control in its own home or garden then the police or anyone else that is worried about the dog being a risk could also seek a control order.

If your dog injures another person's animal, or an owner of an animal reasonably believes that they could be injured if they intervened to protect their animal from your dog, then an offence may be committed.

If you do not keep your dog under control, your dog could be destroyed and you could be banned from keeping a dog. Or you might be ordered to keep your dog muzzled when taking it for a walk.

***If you use your dog to injure someone then you may be charged with malicious wounding. The maximum penalty for this is five years' imprisonment.***



# WHAT IS A BANNED DOG?

Whether your dog is a banned type depends on what your dog actually looks like, rather than the breed or name by which it is called (whether a crossbreed or not).

The law refers to four kinds of dog which are banned:

- Pit Bull Terrier
- Japanese Tosa
- Dogo Argentino
- Fila Brasileiro

While it is the characteristics of a dog which are most important in judging whether it is banned, such dogs may be called by a number of names.

Pit Bull type dogs can be called:

- American Staffordshire Terriers (Am Staffs)
- Irish Staffordshire Bull Terrier (ISBT)
- Irish Blue or Red Nose

Also, some kinds of American Bulldogs have been found to be Pit Bulls.



Pit Bull type dog, photo courtesy of the RSPCA

Descriptions of the banned types are on the Defra website. The address is at the bottom of this factsheet.

If your dog fits one of the descriptions, it may be treated as a banned type no matter what type or breed its parents were.

You may not own, breed from, sell, give away or abandon any banned dog. The police may seize your dog if they think it is a banned type.

The maximum penalty for possessing a banned dog is a fine of £5,000, or six months' imprisonment, or both.

Some of these dogs can be exempted from the ban, but only where a court gives permission for this. For more information about this exemption, please visit the Defra website.

## WHO ENFORCES THE LAW?

- **The police**  
Should be contacted concerning dangerous or banned dogs
- **The local authority**  
Where a dog is causing a nuisance or appears to be a stray

For more information about the laws on dangerous dogs, go to [www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/domestic/dogs.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/welfare/domestic/dogs.htm)

or contact Defra on 08459 33 55 77

or by e-mail: [helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)